

REMARKS

Reexamination and reconsideration of the rejections are hereby requested.

The pending claims stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as not being directed to statutory subject matter. In response, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the step of displaying the one or more matches. Similarly, independent claim 66 has been amended to recite that the computer program causes the one or more matches for the query to be displayed. It is submitted that the claims, as amended herein, define statutory subject matter in that the results of the computer processing are displayed to the user. Reconsideration is requested.

Claims 1-6, 16, 21, 25, 27, 34-36, 39, and 64-68 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith, U.S. Patent No. 6,081, 804 in view of Bellinger et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,870,725.

The present invention is a system for fulfilling an information need using extended matching techniques. According to the present invention in one aspect the method includes receiving a query comprised of one or more fully specified terms and one or more at least partially unspecified terms. The system determines one or more matches for the query wherein a criterion for determining one of the matches specifies that a relative order of at least one term of the query need not be preserved with respect to at least one other term included in the query. As discussed in the specification on page 34, in prior disclosures the order of terms in a match must exactly correspond with the order of terms in the partially unspecified query. For example, if one were trying to find out where the author Agatha Christie was born one might use a partially unspecified query:

Agatha Christie was born _ [LOCATION]

This query would be matched by the string "Agatha Christie was born in England" but would not match the string "England is where Agatha Christie was born."

The present invention would allow this latter string to form a match. According to the invention there are no requirements that the terms in the searched document that matched the terms in the query have any particular order. There may also be intervening words separating the terms that match the partially unspecified terms and those that match the fully specified terms.

In a previous Response to Office Action, Applicant pointed out that Smith does not teach receiving a query composed of one or more fully specified terms and one or more at least partially unspecified terms. In the present Office Action, at line 2, on page 6, the examiner again states that Smith teaches “receiving a query comprised of one or more fully specified terms ... and one or more at least partially unspecified terms.” But, just eight lines farther along, the examiner states that “Smith does not explicitly disclose one or more at least partially unspecified terms.” As the primary reference, the disclosure of Smith is highly important to this prosecution. Repeatedly, including in the current Office Action, the examiner has asserted that Smith discloses a query having one or more at least partially unspecified terms. Now the examiner states that Smith *does* teach one or more at least partially unspecified terms and later asserts that Smith *does not* explicitly disclose one or more at least partially unspecified terms. It is submitted that this inconsistency undermines the examiner’s reasoning and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to respond. The MPEP makes it quite clear that an applicant must be informed, without ambiguity, of the basis of any rejection. It is requested that the examiner take a consistent position with respect to Smith’s teachings and that prosecution be continued without the issuance of a final action to give the applicant the opportunity to address Smith.

The examiner has combined Smith with Bellinger stating that Bellinger discloses one or more at least partially unspecified terms. The examiner particularly points to Belanger for using the wild card symbol # in order to give the additional tools to allocate additional information. The undersigned attorney has reviewed Bellinger and can find no teaching of one or more at least partially unspecified terms. Bellinger merely uses wild cards as known in the prior art. Reconsideration is requested.

Claims 17-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith in view of Bellinger and further in view of Lee et al., U.S. Published Application No. 2001/0044720. The examiner uses Lee to teach that documents are accessible over the internet. It is noted that claims 17 and 18 ultimately depend from claim 1 and are allowable for the reasons discussed above.

Claim 20 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith in view of Bellinger and further in view of Lee. It is requested that the examiner clarify the rejection of claim 20 in that the reasoning relies on Hobbs, U.S. Patent No. 6,523,022, but Hobbs does not

form part of the rejection. It is noted that claim 20 depends from claim 1 and is allowable for the reasons discussed above.

For the foregoing reasons, it is submitted that the pending claims are free of the prior art and early favorable action is requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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